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Ashippun couple gearing up to 'Hustle Up the Hancock'

By Diane Graff of the Daily Times staff

ASHIPPUN - An Ashippun woman is ready for the challenge. She plans to climb the 94 stories of the Hancock building in Chicago, Ill., as a fund-raiser for the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago.

Taking on the challenge in the 11th annual "Hustle Up the Hancock" will be Sue Hoefs. Joining her in the challenge will be her husband, Jerry Hoefs, both firefighters and emergency medical technicians for the Ashippun Fire Department.

"I am really looking forward to it," Hoefs said of the Feb. 24 event. "I am not a motivated exerciser and it is fun to have a goal like this," she said.

Hoefs said she first learned of the "Hustle Up the Hancock" while attending a respiratory care seminar in Green Bay in November. Hoefs is a sleep technician and works at the Sleep Disorders Treatment Center at Aurora Health Care in Waukesha.

A speaker at the seminar who is involved with respiratory care talked about the fund-raiser in Chicago. "It is interesting for me because I am a sleep technician and I had a person in my family die of lung cancer," she said. "I signed up for it (the fund-raiser) in November and the rest is history."

The climb is in part to honor firefighters lost in 9-11. Each year firefighters from across the nation join the Chicago-area firefighters to "Hustle Up the Hancock" and honor the 343 fallen firefighters who gave their lives in the 9-11 World Trade Center disaster. There are 343 spots dedicated to firefighters.

"My husband and I are both doing it," Sue said. "I belong to an exercise place and I go on a stair stepper. I try to do 100 stories. I know it is not the same as really doing stairs," she said.

"My husband has been doing the stair stepper as well and we are getting competitive," Sue, 48, said. But Jerry, who is 55, is also working out on an exercise bike, tread mill and track, she added.

Sue said her husband competed in a triathlon once, "but I don't do any sports. I have never been in an athletic event before."

Sue joined the New York City Firefighters Team to participate. "No one else in Ashippun wanted to do it with us," Sue said.

It could be a family event as the Hoefs' daughter is also planning on doing the climb. But she resides in Florida and mom said she is still working on transportation to the event.

The Hoefs are venturing to the windy city on Feb. 23 to avoid traffic the day of the

event. The hotel they are staying at is eight blocks from the Hancock building. "Our warm-up will be the eight blocks we walk from the hotel," Sue said.

There are different waves of participants in the event. Some people in the event have lung disease or respiratory disorders and only do half the climb. There is also a group that runs up the 94 story building, Sue said.

There are about 2,000 climbers registered for the event and firefighter teams climb from 9 to 10 a.m.

"I think it will be busy and a lot of people in the stairwells," Sue said. She hopes to complete the climb in about 45 minutes. "There is suppose to be a party at the end," she said. There are also emergency medical personnel on hand, she added.

Sue's goal is to raise \$1,000 for the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago to promote healthy lungs and fight lung disease through research, advocacy and education. To date, she has raised about \$210, or 21 percent of her goal.

She has prepared a Web site to assist with the fund-raising efforts. On her site, she has a picture of herself holding an alligator. The picture is to show how brave she is, according to the site.

"I can breath freely, and there are many people who are not as lucky as I," she wrote. "And that includes many firefighters who become ill as a result of their work."

To donate to the climber, go to www.lungchicago.org and click on events, "Hustle Up the Hancock" and then search for the climbers name or contact Hoefs at susan.hoefs@aurora.org.